UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Commissioner for Patents
United States Patent and Trademark Office
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

Paper No. 14

(NAIPC) NORTH AMERICA INTERNATIONAL PATENT OFFICE
P.O. BOX 506
MERRIFIELD, VA 22116

COPY MAILED

DEC 0 9 2004

OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of :
Chen, et al. :
Application No. 09/836,258 :
Filed: April 18, 2001 :
Attorney Docket No. NAUP0280USA

ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a), filed September 30, 2004, to revive the above-identified application.

The petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) is **DISMISSED**.

Any request for reconsideration or petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition Under 37 CFR 1.137(a)." This is **not** a final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C § 704.

The above-identified application became abandoned for failure to reply to file a timely response to the Notice of Allowance and Issue Fee Due, which set a statutory period for reply of three (3) months from its mailing date of August 13, 2002. A proper response was not received within the allowed period, and the application became abandoned on November 14, 2002. A Notice of Abandonment was mailed on December 26, 2002.

A grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a)[1] must be accompanied by: (1) the required reply,[2] unless previously filed; (2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(1); (3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to this paragraph was unavoidable; and (4) any terminal disclaimer required by 37 CFR 1.137(c).

---

[1]As amended effective December 1, 1997. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice 62 Fed. Reg. 53131, 53194-95 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 63, 119-20 (October 21, 1997).

[2] In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.

The instant petition lacks items (3).

The Commissioner is responsible for determining the standard for unavoidable delay and for applying that standard.

"In the specialized field of patent law, . . . the Commissioner of Patent and Trademarks is primarily responsible for the application and enforcement of the various narrow and technical statutory and regulatory provisions. The Commissioner's interpretation of those provisions is entitled to considerable deference."[3]

"[T]he Commissioner's discretion cannot remain wholly uncontrolled, if the facts **clearly** demonstrate that the applicant's delay in prosecuting the application was unavoidable, and that the Commissioner's adverse determination lacked **any** basis in reason or common sense."[4]

"The court's review of a Commissioner's decision is 'limited, however, to a determination of whether the agency finding was arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with the law.'"[5]
"The scope of review under the arbitrary and capricious standard is narrow and a court is not to substitute its judgment for that of the agency."[6]

The standard

"[T]he question of whether an applicant's delay in prosecuting an application was unavoidable must be decided on a case-by-case basis, taking all of the facts and circumstances into account."[7] The general question asked by the Office is: "Did petitioner act as a reasonable and prudent person in relation to his most important business?"[8] Nonawarness of a PTO rule will not constitute unavoidable delay.[9]

---

[3]Rydeen v. Quigg, 748 F.Supp. 900, 904, 16 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1876 (D.D.C. 1990), aff'd without opinion (Rule 36), 937 F.2d 623 (Fed. Cir.1991) (citing Morganroth v. Quigg, 885 F.2d 843, 848, 12 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1125 (Fed. Cir. 1989); Ethicon, Inc. v. Quigg 849 F.2d 1422, 7 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA 1152 (Fed. Cir. 1988) ("an agency' interpretation of a statute it administers is entitled to deference"); see also Chevron U.S.A. Inc. v. Natural Resources Defence Council, Inc., 467 U.S. 837, 844, 81 L. Ed. 694, 104 S. Ct. 2778 (1984) ("if the statute is silent or ambiguous with respect to the specific issue, the question for the court is whether the agency's answer is based on a permissible construction of the statute.")

[4]Commissariat A L'Energie Atomique et al. v. Watson, 274 F.2d 594, 597, 124 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 126 (D.C. Cir. 1960) (emphasis added).

[5]Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 316, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1130 (N.D. Ind. 1987) (citing Camp v. Pitts, 411 U.S. 138, 93 S. Ct.1241, 1244 (1973) (citing 5 U.S.C. §706 (2)(A)); Beerly v. Dept. of Treasury, 768 F.2d 942, 945 (7th Cir. 1985); Smith v. Mossinghoff, 217 U.S. App. D.C. 27, 671 F.2d 533, 538 (D.C. Cir.1982)).

[6]Ray v. Lehman, 55 F.3d 606, 608, 34 U.S.P.Q2d (BNA) 1786 (Fed. Cir. 1995) (citing Motor Vehicles Mfrs. Ass'n v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co., 463 U.S. 29, 43, 77 L.Ed.2d 443, 103 S. Ct. 2856 (1983)).

[7]Id.

[8]See In re Mattulah, 38 App. D.C. 497 (D.C. Cir. 1912).

Application of the standard to the current facts and circumstances

In the instant petition, petitioner maintains that the circumstances leading to the abandonment of the application meet the aforementioned unavoidable standard and, therefore, petitioner qualifies for relief under 37 CFR 1.137(a). In support thereof, petitioner states that the issue fee and publication fee were paid by checks remitted on November 25, 2002.

With regard to item (3) above, the aforementioned argument of petitioner in support of petitioner's belief that the above-cited application was unavoidably abandoned is not persuasive. The reason petitioner's argument must necessarily fail are addressed below.

Petitioner is advised that the Office received the issue and publications fees, however; the payments were not timely made. The Notice of Allowance and Issue Fee set forth a non-extendable statutory period for reply of three months from its mailing date. The notice was mailed on August 13, 2004, requiring a response—payment of the issue fee—by midnight on November 13, 2004. The record reflects that the issue fee and publication fee were paid on November 26, 2002. The Issue Fee Transmittal did not contain an executed certificate of mailing pursuant to 37 CFR 1.8, therefore; the issue and publication fees were noted as being received on November 26, 2002. As the period for response was three months from the mailing date of the notice, the payment of issue and publication fees on November 26, 2002, was untimely and resulted in the abandonment of the application, accordingly. While no reply is currently due because the issue fee and publication fee have been received, petitioner is required to file a grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137 in order to revive the application. Absent some mitigating circumstance, it does not appear that the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) would be granted because the facts as set forth in petition indicate that the issue fee payment was not mailed until November 25, 2002—well after the expiration of the three month statutory period set for reply. Petitioner would not have been able to take advantage of the certificate of mailing procedures pursuant to 37 CFR 1.8 to try to make the payments timely. It is unlikely that significant evidentiary burden presented by 37 CFR 1.137(a) would be able to be met given the facts set forth in the petition.

Petitioner has also failed to satisfy the requirements of item (3) above because a successful petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) requires that petitioner establish that the entire delay in filing the required reply—from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.17(a)--was unavoidable. The due date for the reply was November 13, 2002, and the instant petition was not filed until September 30, 2004. In order for the petition under 37 CFR

---

[9]See Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 977 (Fed. Cir. 1982) (citing Potter v. Dann, 201 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 574 (D.D.C. 1978) for the proposition that counsel's nonawarness of PTO rules does not constitute "unavoidable" delay)). Although court decisions have only addressed the issue of lack of knowledge of an attorney, there is no reason to expect a different result due to lack of knowledge on the part of a pro se (one who prosecutes on his own) applicant. It would be inequitable for a court to determine that a client who spends his hard earned money on an attorney who happens not to know a specific rule should be held to a higher standard than a pro se applicant who makes (or is forced to make) the decision to file the application without the assistance of counsel.

1.1.37(a) to be considered grantable, petitioner must provide an explanation (that amounts to unavoidable delay) for the nearly two year delay in filing a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a).

Alternatively, petitioner may revive the application based on unintentional abandonment under 37 CFR 1.137(b) (enclosed). A grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by the required reply, the required petition fee ($1,370.00 for a large entity and $685.00 for a verified small entity), and a statement that the **entire** delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) was unintentional

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By mail: Commissioner for Patents
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

By facsimile: (703)872-9306
Attn: Office of Petitions

Telephone inquiries concerning this matter may be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3222.

Kenya A. McLaughlin

Kenya A. McLaughlin
Petitions Attorney
Office of Petitions

Enclosure: Form PTO/SB/64